/13 cont./

576 enter a house is decided with the same ceremoniousness. Or, for example, when two horsemen meet each other in the forest. If the younger of the two has something to say to the older one, he must dismount and speak while standing on the ground. At that point, the older one urges him to speak without dismounting.

/14/ The language of the Abkhaz also bears witness to their politeness. In conversation they often use such expressions as: "I ask that your sickness will pass on to me," "may I become the victim of your sicknesses," "may I be the victim instead of you," "may I go around the place where you are lying," etc. In keeping with this last expression, an Abkhaz woman, when visiting her sick foster-child or a person she has not seen for a [608] [155] long time, walks three times around him with the words, "utsge mtsuge seizgat," i. e. "may I carry away your sickness, your misfortune."

For every occasion in life, the Abkhaz has a special greeting, in which are expressed his wishes for prosperity, strength, victory, fertility, profit, etc. In this repertoire of various Abkhaz greetings, there are even some which are especially meant for occasions when one meets persons who are going to a horse-race, greetings for the person who is arranging 181 the races, and so forth. And this is quite understandable and natural for a people such as the Abkhaz, for whom horse and arms constitute the most beloved things, which they have been accustomed to value highly almost from the cradle. The children [565] of members of the upper classes in the very first years of their lives become excellent riders and weapon-bearers. Pistol, [411] [293] dagger, saber, knife, and a whole arsenal of weapons are the constant adornment of every Abkhaz man. For him there is no greater pleasure than to ride armed from head to foot, a burka thrown over him, in the company of his comrades, singing a merry song. Without a horse and arms, life is not worth living to an Abkhaz!

526 Besides horse-races and trick-riding, the following games [541] are worth noting in the life of the Abkhaz: 1. the ball-game, 538 2. arkil-riki, and 3. stone-throwing. The folk-music and folk-poetry of the Abkhaz are extremely meager.

/29 cont./

765 the table at every breakfast and supper.

On the fortieth day, or on one of the Saturdays, the mourning banquet for the deceased is held. A ram is killed and meat dishes are prepared. The relatives of the deceased, who up to [785] this time have been fasting, do not break their fast until this day. The mother and the foster mother, however, fast for a whole year.

The second mourning-banquet involves even greater expenditures. This banquet is called aphskhuvra /see foreign text/ (1).

1. aphs = soul; khu = lot, order; vra = to do, to carry out; i.e., the giving of the banquet in honor of the soul of the deceased.

On this occasion animals are killed, much is spent, and an effort is made to satisfy the soul of the deceased as well as possible. [795] The Abkhaz are convinced that an unsatisfied soul can harm not only their property, but also themselves. This banquet is held in the second year after the death of the departed, more often in the autumn when there is an abundance of everything.

For the day of the aphskhuvra guests are invited to bewail the deceased. Sometimes marula (horse-races) are also organized [541] on this same day in honor of the deceased. If the races have been [202] planned beforehand, everybody is informed in good time by messengers. Meanwhile the hosts are preparing ample supplies of provisions, animals, wine, cheese, bread, etc. On the eve of the aphskhuvra, the belongings of the deceased are on display, and the horse of the departed is tethered near them, covered with a mourning blanket. The deceased's weapons are hung on the saddle of his horse, his rifle, pistol, dagger, saber, whip, etc.; subsequently there is lamentation at the grave with the remains.

And then this scene takes place: a crowd of people of both [302] sexes stand around, barefoot and in mourning. The men's hair is braided, as is the women's. People on foot and on horseback [260] approach them, each of them leading one or two bulls, or a few

/30 cont./

765 526 After the meal, the dzhiriti takes place, reminiscent of the tournaments of the Middle Ages. Now the fair sex occupies the passageway near the house. Young men on horseback assemble in front of the beauties and vie with each other in attempts to display their wit, inventiveness, and knowledge in speeches, and their bravery in the dzhigitovka /trick-riding/ which will follow.

The main dzhigitovka, tarchei /see foreign text/, consists of the following. One of the competing riders accepts from the host of the feast /31/ or from one of the beauties some strips of chintz, a small sewn boot, a rosary of chestnuts, or something else, and, holding this tarchei in his hand, he gallops ahead with it while the other lads pursue him and try to catch him and take away the tarchei. If someone is successful in this, the tarchei passes into the hands of the one who has taken it away from the first rider; then that one races off, and the others again chase after him. The one who escapes capture and manages to bring the tarchei back to the place where the competition started is the winner. The horsemen's competition does not end with this, however; they continue to prance around on horseback, pick up money from the ground at full gallop, etc.

765 541 Sometimes there are also horse-races at the mourning banquet. Children of eight to nine years of age are horsemen. A goal is pointed out to the competitors, and the first one to reach it wins something. In this case, the hosts present the winners with the horse of the deceased, with some animal, or with a khak (arshin or span) of chintz.

VI.

Religious Beliefs of the Abkhaz

971 "Up to the year 1867," wrote Mr. A. in his excellent article on the Abkhaz, "the religious situation among the Abkhaz was absurd in the extreme. One found there the rites of all religious doctrines, from fetishism to Christianity. These people had no precise conception of any religion, but adopted from all of them

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

ox of a certain colour. If the miracles you talk so much about are true, it should be an easy matter for St. George to bring my ox into this church to-night; then, certainly, I will gladly embrace your Faith.' The condition was accepted. On the following morning, early, on opening the gates, there was found within the enclosure an ox which the unbeliever recognized as his own. Thus he was convinced of his error, and embraced the Christian Faith."[1]

(c) *Indl-qwùba.*

The *T'avadi*-s Marshania, and all those Abkhasians who descended from the mountains (Dsabalaa, Dalaa, Pskhvu, etc.), offer sacrifices (a ram, without fail) in exactly the same manner to a sanctity, *Indl-qwùba*, instead of to the Ilori " icon ". I could obtain no information of any kind about this " icon ". Everybody I questioned gave the same answer: *Indl-qwùba* is equal in power to *Dodòrop'sh* and the Ilori " icon ".

These offerings are performed early in the morning, and serve as breakfasts. Every Abkhaz slaughters some animal for the meal (the favourite one is a castrated goat), it is often prepared on the Saturday. They also pay the customary Paschal visits. After the midday sacrificial meal they all go to the public square, where they indulge in games, chiefly football. During Easter week they also organize horse racing, the most popular sport of the Abkhasians.

7. *The Second Day of Easter*

This is a commemoration day. A variety of dishes are prepared, all of which are placed on a table by an open window. The eldest of the family, holding a candle and a glass of wine in his hands, prays to the souls of deceased relatives that they grant his family peace and happiness. Then follows the pouring of wine on the meat and wheat dishes. The whole family stand behind the supplicant. After the prayer each member approaches, places a piece of frankincense on burning embers, and pours wine on the food. Here stands too a smoking pipe. All remain seated in silence, in order that the souls of the deceased ancestors may eat in peace.[2]

The Abkhasian, as has already been stated, have no Paschal greeting such as " Christ is risen ". They welcome each other with a kiss, saying: " May God grant us that we meet again next year," to which the other replies: " And for a hundred years."

[1] Quoted from the Russian and Georgian translation of A. Lamberti's *Relatione della Colchide hoggi detta Mengrelia nella quale si tratta dell'Origine, costumi e Costi naturali di quei Paesi.* Published in Naples, 1654.

[2] This rite will be described in detail in my work *The Cult of the Ancestors.*

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Adzvibzha

oak the Megrelians built a church in its honour, in which this icon rests to this day. It has not forgotten the Svans whom it often visits." My Megrelian informant is an inhabitant of Salkhino.

9. *Àhwsa-rə̀mshap'*

Abkhasians call the first Sunday after Easter Low Sunday, *Àhwsa-rə̀mshap'*, i.e. Pascha for women. This day is set apart for public games. Early in the morning everybody assembles in the public square where they indulge in all sorts of sport, chiefly, however, horse racing and tournaments. Next day the Abkhasians go back to work, and ordinary life is resumed.

The public games (on holidays) are continued till Whit Monday.

10. *Àdsyla-nə̀hwa*

In connection with *Àmshap'* mention may be made of two supplications, *Àdsyla-nə̀hwa* (cf. III (*d*)) and "*Supplication of the Leybaa*". I have not been lucky enough to have witnessed the latter ceremony, which, by the way, belongs to a cult of the Bzib Abkhasians.[1] The worship of the tree, so picturesquely described by ancient writers, such as Strabo, Procopius of Cæsarea, is preserved in a most conspicuous form with its sacred grove, in this supplication of the Leybaa *gvari*, as is also the name of the deity, in that of *Àdsyla-nə̀hwa*; *Àdsyla* denotes tree, *nə̀hwa* (*anə̀hwara*), praying, supplication. The deity of the tree itself is called *Àdsyla-intswakhwə̀*, wherein the latter part denotes "his (of the male rational being) part of god, deity". The Abkhasians in their religion personify and "intellectualize" all manifestations of life, and they strictly distinguish the gender of each of them.

In order to protect wanton children who roam about without restraint, and love to climb trees, the Abkhasians make offerings to the "spirit of the tree", entreating the "great part of the deity of the tree" to guard their children against falling off trees and hurting themselves. The objects offered are capon and cakes. The oak (*a-j*) they consider as the sacred tree, to which they make the offering: walnut-trees (particularly the hazel-nut-tree) and yoke-elms are "pure" trees. If someone falls from the tree they must dig up some coal from under the spot where the person fell; if no coal is found, the accident is regarded as serious; and the person will not survive the fall. An offering is also made to the "spirit of the tree" in the case of certain illnesses, as directed by sorceresses, the sick person being supposed to have fallen ill through having incurred the wrath of the spirit.

[1] About this see the article by N. Pateyna, in the *Collaborator of the Transcaucasian Mission* (in Russian), 1912, pp. 107–112, 124–7.